

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, a homicide bomber in Gardez, Afghanistan, mass-murdered 14 civilians and injured 36 others, including five members of the 218th brigade of the South Carolina National Guard. This affects me personally, as I was a member of the 218th for over 20 years. In July 2000, we trained together in the Mojave Desert at Fort Irwin to face this very evil, and now our courageous troops are stopping terrorists overseas.

Chuck Crumbo of The State newspaper reported the suicide bomber followed the Guard convoy and detonated himself in the midst of innocent women and children on a crowded street. This act of cowardice confirms why we must stop the terrorists overseas or they will return to America. In the past 96 hours, there was an attack in Baghdad, terrorists acted in Lebanon, and a shopping mall was blown up in Turkey.

I know my comrades, ably led by General Bob Livingston, are ready to face al Qaeda's boast of Afghanistan and Iraq as the central front in the global war on terrorism. This is how we can best protect American families. I have never been prouder of the Guard's service.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

HONORING AND REWARDING OUR TROOPS FOR THEIR VALOR AND SACRIFICE

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, last week the White House recommended a veto of the defense authorization bill and said Congress wants to pay our troops too much for defending America. It is unconscionable to suggest our troops aren't worth a half percent more in pay, while many of their families scrape by on food stamps or pay for their own body armor.

Paying our troops what they deserve should go hand in hand with relieving them of taxes they don't deserve. That is why the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) and I introduced a bill last week to eliminate Federal taxation of student loan reimbursements to military personnel and Federal civilian employees.

Our bill, H.R. 2363, eliminates this tax and creates an incentive to help our Armed Forces compete with private sector recruitment and retention by lowering the soaring debt faced by college graduates.

Mr. Speaker, as we salute our troops and honor our fallen this Memorial Day, let's give them the pay raise they deserve.

EMPHASIZING PREVENTIVE CARE IN MEDICARE PROGRAM

(Mrs. CAPITO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the importance of preventive care in the Medicare program.

As we all know, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 made many important and much-needed changes to the Medicare program. The creation of the Medicare prescription drug benefit was a critically important modernization of the program and has been especially successful in my home State of West Virginia, with 287,000 beneficiaries.

But the prescription drug benefit is just one component of the overall changes in Medicare. If we can encourage more seniors to actually use the preventive benefits, we can help them prevent more costly procedures and longer stays in the hospital.

That is why the "Welcome to Medicare" screening is so vitally important. Many of the elements that seniors face today can be effectively managed with prescription medicine and regular visits to their physicians. However, disease management is only effective if we catch the disease early.

I would like to encourage my colleagues to educate their constituents about these important modernizations to the Medicare program so we can all better serve our senior citizens.

DEMOCRATS WORKING TO ESTABLISH A NEW, SMART AND FAIR ENERGY POLICY

(Mr. SARBANES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, as Americans across the country begin planning their summer vacations, one major constraint they will have to face is the severely high price of gas. We are once again seeing record gas prices this Memorial Day, making the prospect of travel daunting for many families. Why is this trend continuing? For 6 years, President Bush and the Republican Congress failed to enact a comprehensive energy strategy to provide relief from these skyrocketing costs.

This Democratic Congress is ready to act and move our Nation in a new direction on energy. Already we have voted to roll back billions of dollars in subsidies to Big Oil and instead reinvest those funds in renewable energy. And now this week we will take up the issue of price gouging by the oil industry. We have seen the first quarter reports. The oil companies are making record profits, and it is time they were held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, this Democratic Congress will work hard to pass legislation that can establish a new, smart, and fair energy policy for the American people.

HONORING VERA WERNER ON HER 105TH BIRTHDAY

(Mrs. BACHMANN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a great American and a woman from my district, Mrs. Vera Werner, on the occasion of her 105th birthday. It is a goal to which we all aspire but very few of us ever achieve.

Vera was born in 1902 in Melrose, Minnesota, on May 31, a great day. She is an unassuming Minnesotan, Mr. Speaker. She married, and 2 years later she moved to the big city of St. Cloud, Minnesota. During her time there, she touched many people's lives. Like so many Americans, she had numerous friends. She was on a bowling league for 40 years and she worked in the local department store.

But, Mr. Speaker, Vera Werner accomplished the most important work of any American: She was a mother to four children, she was a grandmother to 21, a great-grandmother to more than 40, and she has so many great-great-grandchildren that people can't keep count. There is no more important function as an American, Mr. Speaker, than to be a good mother or a good father.

Today, Vera, our Nation salutes you, and we wish you happy 105th birthday.

HOW EXACTLY IS PRESIDENT SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS WHEN HE THREATENS A VETO OF DOD PAY INCREASE?

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, this House on a bipartisan basis overwhelmingly supported our troops last week by giving them a 3.5 percent pay raise over the next year. What is our President's response? A threatened veto. In a statement opposing the higher pay raise, the administration noted that the President's proposal, in their opinion, provided a good quality of life for servicemembers and families.

Mr. President, apparently you have not read the 2004 Kaiser Family Foundation report that indicates that over one in five military families rely on food stamps or WIC for Federal aid. This is simply unacceptable.

The best way we can send a message to our troops that we support the grueling work that they do on a daily basis is by showing it, by putting more money in their pockets so they can better provide for their families.

The bottom line is that men and women fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan should not have to supplement their income through living on food stamps or WIC. We encourage the President to reconsider the veto threat and to support the entire pay raise.

FINDING MIDDLE GROUND ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, last year, the President of the United States